hospitals, schools, nay, the very district poor-houses! And yet we have no Mont de Piete.

Of churches we have many, and more every day arise. Is a subscription wanting, thousands flow in for the promotion of religion; but is not the glory of God promoted most and best by conducing to the happiness of his creatures? Charity with us is diffuse, incessant, and indefinite: the countless private calls on humanity are answered, and in too many unworthy instances satisfied. Give the claim only a *body* and *form*, and where was it ever found deficient? This plan, then, of Monts de Pietè (and I adopt the phrase in honour of the French origination) needs but this *body* and *form*—it requires but the advocacy of the press—it has but to be held up to the sympathies of the rich, and the result will be sure to be the successful establishment of institutions which, in times of poverty, sickness, and calamity will yield inestimable, because prompt, succour to the indigent population,—the source of labour and the stay of the empire.

Commerce may prosper and wealth accumulate amongst the section of proprietors, but unless that wealth be diffused, and the condition of the multitude (the producers) be also improved and ameliorated, the nation cannot be said to prosper: the aggregation of property in vast hoards benefits not, for whilst it elevates some above their natural sphere, it depresses the great mass below the rights of humanity; and the extreme of luxury on the one hand renders that privation the more severe under which the poor, on the other hand, are languishing. QUONDAM.

THE POSITION OF THE ALTAR OR COMMUNION TABLE IN EARLY CHURCHES.

I AM sorry to be obliged to trouble you again on this subject, but I will strictly obey your injunction, and not follow Mr. Elliott in converting a simple question of fact into a theological discussion. I might fairly leave the question as it now stands, as Mr. Elliott having expressed an opinion contrary to the established views of those having the same material to judge from with himself, and having, as it appears to me, failed in bringing any kind of evidence in favour of his opinion,* the ordinary rules of discussion render it needless to go into evidence on the subject. Besides this, being simply an architect, and having neither the time nor learning for an inquiry which might set one wandering through the whole range of ancient fathers and church historians, I am only anxious to show that the *onus probandi* still rests with your correspondent, and that he, in stating a novel or unusual opinion, ought at least to have given it *as such*, and not to have stated it in terms calculated to lead the uninformed to suppose it an admitted and incontrovertible fact.

Mr. Elliott's more important assertions may be condensed into three:—

1. That in the early churches there was "nothing resembling the nature of the sanctuary"—"no semblance of a holy place."

2. That there was in them "no semblance"—"nothing even to remind men of an altar."

3. That though there was a raised platform at one end of them, on this "the communion table was *never placed*, but invariably stood in the midst of the congregation."

On the first, I will mention that we learn from Bingham that the *bema*, or tribunal, was, in addition to its ordinary name, called "The Holy"—"The Holy of Holies"—"The *Sacrarium*;" and that the same word is sometimes used for it by which the Seventy designate the sanctuary in the Old Testament. Bishop Sparrow speaks of the "*αγιον βῆμα*" (*the holy tribunal*), "the *sanctuary*, railed in, of old" . . . "that it might not be pressed upon by the multitude." Wheatly speaks of the "*sacrarium*, since called the chancel;" and it is notorious, that Eusebius, in the passage so frequently quoted, speaks of the "*Holy of Holies*" being surrounded with a screen or railing. These authorities are sufficient to throw upon your correspondent the burden of proving that there was "no semblance of a holy place."

On the second assertion (that there was no semblance—nothing to remind men of an altar), it seems almost absurd to bring authorities to prove the prevalence of the contrary opinion. Bingham seems to feel this, and says "we never read of any such dispute in the primitive Church; for ancient writers used both names indifferently, some calling it altar, others the Lord's Table," &c. Mede actually doubts whether it is called anything else than altar by writers of the two first ages, which is, of course, saying too much. It appears that Ignatius, Irenæus, Origen, Tertullian, Cyprian, Chrysostom, Zeno, &c., &c., all use the term altar. I am aware that Ignatius is not a certain authority, but there is evidence enough without him; and even the interpolations of his works will come within the range given us by Mr. Elliott. Eusebius uses the same word; indeed, it seems to have been always used indifferently with other terms, though it is true that the early Christians admitted, *as between themselves and the Pagans and the Jews*, that they had no altars—meaning that they had no altar for the bloody sacrifice of slain victims. The fact of its being in the earlier ages of wood does not affect this question, as even in the Jewish tabernacle both the altars were mainly of that material. Bishop Sparrow says that the "names altar or holy table were used for the same things, though most frequently the fathers and councils use the word *altar*." With such evidence before him, how can Mr. Elliott say that there was nothing in the ancient churches "even to remind men of an altar?"

The remaining assertion is that the holy table was never placed in the chancel, but always in the midst of the congregation.

That it was in one sense often in the midst of the congregation, I admit, inasmuch as the chancel or sanctuary was not limited usually to the mere projecting apse, but protruded into the church, so that some portions of the congregation were on either side of it, as in the case of a modern church with chancel aisles. This, however, is not, I apprehend, what Mr. Elliott means; he claims for it a place altogether external to the *cancelli*. The famous passage in Eusebius on this point has, I believe, by some been held to favour Mr. Elliott's view; but if so, what is the meaning of the innumerable regulations as to who were and who were not to be admitted to approach the altar? The oldest English translation I have met with (A.D. 1584) gives it thus: "But this man having finished the temple, and the most high seates for the presidents honor, againe having placed the underseates in a passing good order, and last of all the most holy place, the altar being set in the middest: againe, he so compassed these things with wooden rails wrought up to the top with artificial carving that too many might not come therein." Bingham says on this, that it "is not to be interpreted, as some have misunderstood it, of the altar's being in the middle of the nave or body of the church, but in the middle of the *bema*, or sanctuary, at such a distance from the upper end as that the synthronus, the seats of the bishop and presbyters might be behind it."

The Chevalier Bunsen in his "Basilicas of Christian Rome," after quoting this passage from Eusebius, explains it that "the altar was in the middle of the square" (*i.e.* the intersection of transept) "enclosed behind by the clergy, on both sides by the magisterial persons, so that the entire space was shut off from the rest with screens, in front against the people, on both sides against the catechumens." I think he is slightly mistaken about the magisterial persons, probably understanding the *Solea* to be referred to. Bingham, however, gives good reasons for understanding this of the presbytery; but this does not affect the case that the altar was *within the cancelli*. The talented reviewer of M. Bunsen, in the *Quarterly*, clearly lays down the whole arrangement, and describes the altar as "*within the sanctuary* more or less advanced towards the choir." The late Mr. Hope, Professor Willis, Wheatly, and Bishops Beveridge and Sparrow, give it precisely the same position. Siegel, in his "Christlich-Kirchliche Alterthümer," says that in the latter half of the fourth century, the council of Laodicea (A.D. 361), refused the laity admittance to the altar," and that it was "early the custom to separate the choir, *the place where the altar stood*, from the nave of the church with screens." Again, in describing the church of St. Sophia, from Procopius, he says, after mentioning the *cancelli* and their gates, "In this *bema*, or *αγιον αγιων*, stood the altar or holy table." Thus we find it to have been in old St. Peter's; thus also in the early cathedral of Canterbury, said to have been copied in its arrangement from St. Peter's; and thus I may boldly say it clearly appears to have been placed in every ancient church of which we have any description extant: how then, when we find it precisely in this position in the Basilicas, as they have come down to us to the present day, can we assert that it is a modern alteration, and that in early churches it was *never* placed there?

Of the churches anterior to the time of Constantine, we know but little, but that little does not militate against what we know of their successors. It would be absurd to expect that the upper rooms, in which the early disciples worshipped in small and select companies, should present all the same arrangements with a church for a mixed congregation at a period of more advanced extension of Christianity; but, as the churches of Constantine were the immediate successors of those destroyed throughout the empire by Diocletian, it is reasonable to suppose that their arrangements were the same, though their decorations were far more magnificent; and Eusebius's description does not appear intended to point out any novelty of arrangement.

I think I have said enough (though the case is so obvious that I feel almost to be trifling with your readers by going into it) to prove that the old churches, according to the received opinion, had a *sanctuary* and an *altar*, and that the altar *was in the sanctuary*. I will now add, that they had, for the most part, in advance of the sanctuary, a *choir*, enclosed by a second range of *cancelli*; thus we have, firstly, at the extreme end, the seats for the bishop and higher clergy; secondly, the altar, with its *cancelli*; thirdly, the choir, with its *cancelli*: as, though of later date, in San Clemente, and nearly as in the early cathedral at Canterbury. The great change from this to the later arrangement was to bring the seats of the higher clergy forward into the choir, and the doing away with the second or sanctuary screen, which gives us at once our ordinary chancel arrangement; a change quite unconnected with any religious innovations. To these innovations are to be attributed the multiplication of altars and the increased exclusiveness of choir screens,* but the main change was one simply of convenience. The depth, too, of chancels had nothing whatever to do with transubstantiation, but simply arose from the increased number of the clergy or choir to be seated, and was not a constant feature, but varied directly with the number of persons to be provided for, which accounts, on the simplest utilitarian principle, for the extraordinary varieties of length which we find in our old chancels. The main divisions of our churches, *i. e.*, the sanctuary, the choir, and the nave, agree precisely in principle with those of the early churches, differing only in the altered position of the clergy, who, instead of sitting behind the *altar*, are placed, if about to officiate at the communion, at the side of the altar, if otherwise, with the choir; so that, notwithstanding all the admitted innovations of the Middle Ages, the grand primitive divisions have been constantly adhered to, and are still retained by our own church,† though carelessness or igno-

* The passage cited from Justin Martyr is absolutely silent on all the questions at issue.

* I have, for brevity's sake, avoided going into the peculiar arrangements of the eastern, as distinguished from the western church. I may mention that the *ove* dense table, or table of prothesis, was not one of the late additions, as Mr. Elliott supposes.—See Bingham, Siegel, &c.

† The concession of our reformers as to bringing forward the altar table, at the time of communion, is no sufficient ground for Mr. Elliott's claim upon them as agreeing with him. There can be no doubt that they had not had much opportunity of searching into ancient